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INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Korea

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SUBJECT North Korean Interrogation of Border Crossers

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1. A trader traveling between North and South Korea made a regular trip of about a week's duration to the south and started to return to his home in North Korea in early March 1949. He had actually crossed the border in the Chunchon area when he was arrested by officers of the Political Defense Department. The arrest occurred in the evening, and he was detained for the night in an empty room of the local Peace Preservation Platoon office, with other persons who had also been caught crossing either to or from South Korea.
2. On the following morning, the persons crossing to South Korea were examined first, beginning with those who appeared to be moving there permanently or who carried valuables. Those entering North Korea were then examined. The trader was interrogated by an officer in the Political Defense Department.
3. The border crosser was asked for his name, birthplace, age, education, occupation, family status, and current address. When he could not show his identification card, he said that he had left it with a friend in North Korea. When asked whether he thought it right to cross the line, he replied that he did not, but that business made it necessary. He was searched for hidden letters or documents, and when none was found, the interrogation continued.
4. The trader was asked about American troops and members of the Northwest Youth Association in the 38th Parallel area. He admitted being questioned by members of the Great Korean Youth League, with which the Northwest Youth League had merged, as to whether he belonged to the North Korean Labor Party and had performed a special mission for it in South Korea. The trader stated that he had refused to collect information for the Great Korean Youth League on the grounds that he was a simple merchant and incapable of such a task.
5. He had just announced that he intended to make no more trips to South Korea when the interrogation was interrupted by an officer in civilian clothes, who gave a whispered direction to the interrogator.
6. The interrogator then instructed the border crosser to introduce himself to an officer of the Peace Preservation Battalion in Yonchon (127-04, 38-06). The border crosser was to use the interrogator's name as recommendation in order to secure protection. In return for assistance on his future trips,

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the trader was asked to procure a short-wave radio receiver from South Korea. The trader objected that he knew nothing about purchasing such equipment and that it was closely restricted in South Korea and dangerous to carry. The officer countered by stating that anyone who refused to comply with requests from the Peace Preservation Corps was considered a revolutionary element.

6. The interview was terminated by the trader refusing to do anything without time for consideration. After six days more imprisonment, he was again asked to obtain radio receivers. Although he made no definite commitments, he was then released (26 March) and allowed to return home.

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